DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 195 985 CS 005 808

AUTHOR Kirkland, Eleanor R.
TITLE Child Readiness for Reading: What Can Parents Do?
PUB DATE Nov 80
NOTE 11p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the California Reading Asscciation (14th, Sacramento, CA, November 6-8, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Development: *Family Environment: *Parent Role: Preschool Education: *Reading Aloud to Others: Reading Instruction: *Reading Readiness: Reading Skills: Skill Development

ABSTRACT

One of the nonschool factors influencing children's reading ability is the home environment. Data from recent research point out four factors that promote child readiness for reading in the home: (1) availability and range of printed materials in the home: (2) reading is done in the home: (3) home facilitates contact with paper and pencil: (4) parents and others in the home respond to what the child is trying to do. To be ready to read, a child must develop organically, socially, and symbolically. The child needs to be able to master mechanical problems in reading, to be involved in carrying out a temporal-spatial sequence, and to be able to translate the spoken or visual words into concepts with which he or she is familiar. There is no such thing as "reading readiness," there is only "child readiness." There are many activities that parents can provide that will help develop the child readiness skills for reading. Parents can emphasize talking at a very early age. Sitting a child in one's lap and reading aloud, providing a quiet time and place for children to read, introducing the child to a public library, and showing by example that reading is an important factor in adult life can help a child grow into reading. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED195985

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Child Readiness For Reading: What Can Parents Do?

Presented by
Dr. Eleanor R. Kirkland
California State University, Sacramento

at the
California Reading Association Conference
Sacramento, November 7, 1980

in a
Pi Lambda Co-sponsored Symposium -
for Parents

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Eleanor R. Kirkland

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS005808

CHILD READINESS FOR READING: WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

Over the years there has been an over abundance of research data on how children learn to read and why the are not reading in a school setting, however little has been written on the influence of non-school factors. Dolores Durkin emphasized non-school factors in explaining the difference noted in the reading levels of children of the same age. One of the non-school factors deals with home environment. What type of home environment promotes child readiness for reading? Data from recent research points out four factors that appear consistently in the home environment of early readers:

1. Availability and range of printed materials in the home: This includes not only books, but also TV schedules, labels, cookbooks, maps, newspapers, magazines, and other everyday printed materials.
2. Reading is done in the home: The child must learn that print is meaningful; must become acquainted with the sound and structure of written language; and must see others reading.
3. The home facilitates contact with paper and pencil: All children enjoy scribbling, drawing and copying letters--activities which generally reinforce learning to read.
4. Parents and others in the home respond to what the child is trying to do: Questions are answered when the child asks about letters, sounds or words. They respond to the child's needs rather than concentrate on the "teaching of reading."

The home environment is the hidden curriculum for the young child. It is in this context that he learns the meaning of words by handling and observing

objects and their labels. Children who are given a wide variety of experiences such as helping plant a garden; visiting the zoo and parks; helping Daddy cut the grass; going to the supermarket are developing concepts that will encourage comprehension of what is read. Parents believe the success of their child's future rests with his ability to read.

To be ready to read requires nurturing and maturing. What is involved in being able to read? Being in this question signifies the human being or child who must learn to read and able signifies ability. What abilities must the small child have to become a human being able to read? He must develop organically, socially and symbolically. Organic development would include sensory development to receive information; perceptual development to understand, organize and integrate information; and neuro-muscular development to utilize information in a physical manner. The child develops socially in order to relate to other people. Symbolic development would include concept formation, verbal language (listening and speaking) and visual language (reading and writing).

To be more specific, the child must have:

1. gross motor control in order to sit in a position and hold a book comfortably;
2. fine muscle control to open a book and turn the pages;
3. eye-hand coordination to insure ability to focus upon a figure in space - first the books, then the specific words to be read;
4. the ability to perceive and orient oneself to the top, bottom, sides and front and back of the object (top and sides of pages, difference between letters such as b and d, holding the book in front of you, etc.);
5. ability to perceive a figure in space;

6. ability to move eyes sequentially from one word to the next, left to right, top to bottom and page to page (at least in English);
7. ability to see differences in letters that make up words,
8. ability to classify and recognize common characteristics or words, pictures, numbers, letters, etc.;
9. ability to understand concepts presented in storybooks, etc.;
10. ability to develop positive interpersonal relationships with others to be motivated to learn to read;
11. ability to distinguish likenesses and differences in order to be able to focus on and repeat words and sounds in words, and associate these sounds with their visual counterparts in reading.

The complexity and interrelativeness of these skills are vast. By the simplest definition, a child needs to be able to master mechanical problems in reading; to be involved in carrying out a temporal-spatial sequence; and to be able to translate the spoken words, or visual words, into concepts with which he is familiar.

There is no such thing as "reading readiness". There is only "child-readiness" - more precisely "individual child readiness". There are many activities which parents can and do provide every day that will help develop the child readiness skills for reading.

This means that children need, along with physical, cognitive and social-emotional growth and development, experiences they can remember. There is no magic age when every child is ready. It has been suggested that it is impossible to find a child that is completely ready to read in all areas. The general agreement is that you should not push young children; reading will come when he is ready to discover it and you cannot stop him from reading.

As an infant, every coo and gu gle he makes is preparing him for reading. Although he is unable to communicate with you in words, he is able to express his needs and wants through various cries and utterances. It is important that parents stimulate and reinforce his sound-making by responding positively so that he will repeat the sounds. They should also play with him, introducing him to the sounds around him. This will also increase his listening ability which is essential to all learning. Talking to the baby while doing everyday routines such as bathing, dressing, feeding, etc., will help develop his languag. skill.

The 3-4 month old child is ready for exposure to books. Even though he appears not to be listening, the sound of the words, will get through to him. The turning of the pages, looking at the pictures is just a beginning. In addition parents can recite nursery rhymes, sing songs, and make conversation. Nursery rhymes are a fun thing for a child to enjoy. These are first used as listening activities by the children and then they become the tale tellers as they look through, on their own, a Mother Goose Book. The hypnotic rhythm a[illegible]e repetition of the sounds is also based on auditory memory.

It is important to emphasize words and talk to the baby during the 7-8 month period when babbling occurs. The child begins playing with sounds, repeating the sounds over and over and really enjoying his first attempt at language. Usually by 10 months the child can identify key characters and pictures of objects in a large picture book. Between 18 and 24 months, a dramatic change takes place in the number of words the child uses and understands. The three-year-old will probably know the story better than the reader.

What are Some of the Contributions of the Home

The child who is ready for reading has lived in a home environment that provided:

1. a time for children to be held and have stories read to them. It is easier for the child to listen if held on your lap when a story is read. In this one-to-one relationship, he has close interaction with the reader and the book. In a book about fire trucks he needs to be able to give the siren sound when it is appropriate. With the story "Brown Bear, Brown Bear" he listens so that he can repeat what the Brown Bear sees.

These activities take accurate listening to follow the story and to know the right time to respond. Storytelling that encourages interaction between the teller and the listener helps develop auditory skills;

2. awareness of children's interest span;
3. quiet time to read or be read to, without television or stereo; and
4. all kinds of books everywhere as well as a blackboard.

These indicate that the parents value reading and want these experiences for themselves as well as for their children. Reading then becomes a way of life for the family.

Children learn the concept of reading by inferring it from the daily situations in which they are involved. When mother "reads" the newspaper, she is not to be interrupted. Daddy "reads" a picture book or storybook to the child before bed. Everyone "reads" signs, directions, labels, and anything in print, although these activities are often not specifically called reading. Out of all this confusion children not only have to figure out what reading is and why it is done, but also how to do it!

Children's informal concept of reading changes as they begin formal reading instruction in school. Children need to realize that the funny squiggles or print represent constant meaning. They also learn that the squiggles are symbols for language which have been written down. These concepts help children understand that each time a printed message is read, the meaning remains more or less the same, and that the message is communicated in language which is similar to their own language. They also learn that print exists as a result of someone's desire to communicate with others. This communication can serve many functions to inform, to entertain, to direct, or to share personal experiences.

Books, Books, Books, Everywhere:

Books here, books there, books all about the house establish them in the every day life of the family. If there are books by the bedside, in the kitchen, coming out of bookcases, and left open by an easy chair, the child gets the idea that books are an intricate part of the adult life. Among all these books the child's own books should be easily found, available to pick up, to look at or ask a parent to read. Children should be introduced to the public library as his largest source of books. It is an exciting experience for the young child.

Scribblers and Blackboards:

Durkin has pointed out that many early readers have had a blackboard. The children started out aimlessly scribbling. They then gradually drew objects and people. Later they were observed making letters or copying them from an alphabet book. She also noted that the children learned to print first, then came spelling which developed into reading. Lots of drawing on the blackboard seemed, therefore, to help the child get ready to read.

Children Grow into Reading:

Since children develop at different rates, it is important not to force the issue of reading unless they are interested. The key is the child's interest. If the child is interested and sustains attention for a period of time, reading activities can be started.

Reading Activities for Preschoolers:

What kinds of activities can parents do with their preschool children? Reading good stories and books more than once builds the concepts that one can enjoy an author's message and teach reading, and that the printed message is permanent and sequential. When books are selected for reading, they should be books which both the parents and child can enjoy. When a story has been read more than once, the child can be encouraged to "read" the story, page by page, to parents or siblings. This process is close to memorization but nevertheless is extremely important. In "reading" a story, the child relates the story in a sequential fashion. The story has a beginning, middle, and end. The child uses the pictures in the book as well as the language as a guide.

Reading Aloud:

Reading aloud to a child also helps develop a sense of written language. Occasionally stop and ask what will happen next. This builds predictability and anticipation for sequence of events. Pauses during reading can also allow for questions to check comprehension when difficult concepts appear in the text. These concepts can be explained if the child has not understood them. Most important, however, is the enjoyment of hearing a good story which someone has written for all to share. Other activities during reading should supplement, not interfere.

Writing Activities:

Children can also develop a sense of communication through involvement in writing activities. They begin to see that words are made of letters in a specific order. Usually the first word that children want to write is their name. This can start with tracing and copying. If a child is very young or lacks the motor coordination necessary to write, magnetized letters can be used.

Language Experience:

Another writing related activity is called language experience. The child tells a story about a favorite painting or perhaps an event during school (at home). The parent prints the story word for word. This "story" may be one word, a phrase, a sentence or several sentences, and can be illustrated by the child. The parent (other) and child can read these stories again and again, which shows the child that the message is there to stay. It is not unusual for young children to forget their stories after a period of time. Parents can reread them with the children to revitalize and share forgotten memories. As children get older, they can begin to write their own stories.

Road Signs Teach Reading:

Children often are fascinated by printed words in their environment asking parents, "What does that say?" Parents can encourage their children in an informal way by pointing out meaningful words such as road signs, store names, signs and labels on food packages. Sometimes children enjoy having printed labels on their favorite toys at home. From these activities children begin to internalize that there are symbols in a sequence which are associated with a certain meaning in a particular context.

Vocabulary Critical for Comprehension:

Development of vocabulary and concepts through varied experience is another critical part of reading comprehension. Word recognition techniques are not useful if a child can recognize the word but not relate the word to a concept. Many research studies have shown that knowledge of vocabulary is the most important single factor in reading comprehension. Involve children in a broad range of experiences and encourage them to talk about their experiences. Help them learn to question what they don't understand. Describing an experience is useful. These activities will help the development and retention of both the new concepts and the new vocabulary associated with the concepts.

Summary:

In summary, there are many activities which help children develop a solid foundation for formal reading instruction in school. Most parents do many of these activities with their children intuitively, but being aware of their value will aid a parent. Helping a child to build his or her concept of reading, a positive attitude toward reading and books, and a rich background of words and concepts are the major and critical parts of getting ready for school and formal reading instruction.